AN ESSAY ON MAN.

IN

EPISTLES to a FRIEND.

The SECOND EDITION.

PART I.

LONDON:

Printed for *J. Wilford*, at the *Three Flower-de-luces*, behind the *Chapter-house*, St. *Pauls*.

[Price One Shilling.]

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BRITISH MUSEUM

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TO THE READER.

AS the Epiſtolary Way of Writing hath prevailed much of late, we have ventured to publiſh this Piece compoſed ſome Time ſince, and whoſe Author choſe this Manner, notwithſtanding his Subject was high and of dignity, becauſe of its being mixt with Argument, *which of its Nature approacheth to Proſe. This, which we firſt give the Reader, treats of the* Nature and State of Man, *with*

To the READER.

Respect to the UNIVERSAL SYSTEM; *the rest will treat of him with Respect to* his OWN SYSTEM, *as an* Individual, *and as a* Member of Society, *under one or other of which Heads all Ethicks are included.*

As he imitates *no Man, so he would be thought to vye with no Man in these Epistles, particularly with the noted Author of* TWO lately published: *But this he may most surely say, that the Matter of them is such, as is of* Importance *to* all in general, *and of* Offence *to* none in particular.

AN

ESSAY on *MAN.*

IN

EPISTLES to a *FRIEND.*

WAKE! my LÆLIUS, leave all meaner Things
To low Ambition and the Pride of Kings.
Let Us (ſince Life can little more ſupply
Than juſt to look about us, and to die)
Expatiate free, o'er all this *ſcene of Man*;
A mighty Maze! of Walks without a Plan;
Or wild, where weeds and flowers promiſcuous ſhoot;
Or Garden, tempting with forbidden fruit.

Together let us beat this ample *Field*,
Try what the open, what the covert, yield;
The latent tracts, or giddy heights explore,
Of all who blindly creep, or ſightleſs ſoar.
Eye Nature's walks; ſhoot Folly as it flie's,
And catch the Manners, living as they riſe;
Laugh where we *muſt*; be candid where we *can*;
But vindicate the Ways of *God* to Man.

Say firſt, of *God* above, or *Man* below,
What can we *reaſon*, but from what we *know*?
Of Man, what ſee we but his Station here,
From which to reaſon, or to which refer?
Thro' Worlds unbounded tho' the God be known;
'Tis ours to trace him, only in our own.
Of this vaſt Frame the Bearings, and the Ties,
The ſtrong Connections, nice Dependencies,
And Centres juſt, has thy pervading Soul
Look'd thro'? Or can a part contain the Whole?
Is the great Chain that draws all to agree,
And drawn ſupports, upheld by God, or thee?

He who thro' vaſt Immenſity can pierce,
See Worlds on Worlds compoſe one Univerſe,
Obſerve how Syſtem into Syſtem runs,
What other Planets, and what other Suns,
What vary'd Being peoples ev'ry Star;
May tell, why Heav'n has made us as we are.

When the proud Steed ſhall know, why Man reſtrains
His fiery courſe, or drives him o'er the plains;
When the dull Ox, why now he breaks the clod,
Now wears a Garland, an Ægyptian God;
Then ſhall Man's pride and dulneſs comprehend
His Action's, Paſſion's, Being's, Uſe and End;
Why doing, ſuff'ring, check'd, impell'd; and why
This hour a Slave, the next a Deity?

Preſumptuous Man! the Reaſon wouldſt thou find,
Why made ſo weak, ſo little, and ſo blind?
Firſt, if thou can'ſt, the harder reaſon gueſs,
Why made no weaker, blinder, and no leſs?
Ask of thy Mother Earth, why Oaks are made
Taller or ſtronger than the weeds they ſhade?

Or ask of yonder argent fields above,
Why Jove's Satellites are leſs than Jove?
Of Syſtems poſſible, if 'tis confeſt
That Wiſdom infinite muſt form the *Beſt*,
Where all muſt full or not coherent be,
And all that riſes, riſe in due degree;
Then, in the ſcale of Life and Sence, 'tis plain
There muſt be, *ſome where*, ſuch a Rank as Man;
And all the queſtion (wrangle e'er ſo long)
Is only this, if God has *plac'd* him wrong?
Reſpecting *Man* whatever wrong we call,
May, muſt be right, as relative to *All*.
In human works, tho' labour'd on with pain,
A thouſand movements ſcarce one purpoſe gain;
In God's, one ſingle can *its End* produce,
Yet ſerves to ſecond too ſome *other Uſe*.
So Man, who here ſeems principal alone,
Perhaps acts ſecond to ſome Sphere unknown,
Touches ſome Wheel, or verges to ſome Gole;
'Tis but a Part we ſee, and not a Whole.

Then ſay not Man's imperfect, Heav'n in fault;
Say rather, Man's as perfect as he ought:
His being meaſur'd to his ſtate, and place,
His time a Moment, and a Point his ſpace.
Heav'n from all creatures hides the book of Fate,
All but the page preſcrib'd, their *preſent ſtate*;
From Brutes what Men, from Men what Spirits know;
Or who could ſuffer Being here below?
The Lamb thy riot dooms to bleed to day,
Had he thy *Reaſon*, would he ſkip and play?
Pleas'd to the laſt, he crops the flow'ry food,
And licks the hand juſt rais'd to ſhed his blood.
Oh blindneſs to the future! kindly giv'n,
That each may fill the Circle mark'd by Heav'n,
Who ſees with equal eye, as God of All,
A Hero periſh, or a Sparrow fall,
Atoms, or Syſtems, into ruin hurl'd,
And now a Bubble burſt, and now a World!
Hope humbly then, with trembling pinions ſoar;
Wait the great teacher, Death, and God adore!

What bliſs above, he gives not thee to know,
But gives that *Hope* to be thy bliſs below.
Hope ſprings eternal in the human breaſt;
Man never *is*, but always *to be* bleſt.
The ſoul uneaſy, and confin'd at home,
Reſts, and expatiates, in a life to come.
If to be perfect in a certain ſtate,
What matter, here or there, or ſoon or late?
Safe in the hand of one diſpoſing Pow'r,
Or in the natal, or the mortal hour:
And he that's bleſs'd to day, as fully ſo,
As who began ten thouſand years ago.

Lo! the poor Indian, whoſe untutor'd mind
Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind;
His ſoul, proud Science never taught to ſtray
Far as the Solar walk, or Milky way;
Yet ſimple Nature to his hope has giv'n
Behind the cloud-topt hill an humbler Heav'n,
Some ſafer world in depth of woods embrac'd,
Some happier iſland in the watry waſte,

Where Slaves once more their native land behold,
No Fiends torment, nor Chriſtians thirſt for Gold.
But does he ſay, the Maker is not *good*,
Till he's exalted to what ſtate he wou'd?
Himſelf alone high Heav'ns peculiar care;
Alone made happy, when he will, and where?
To *be*, contents his natural deſire,
He asks no Angel's wing or Seraph's fire;
But thinks, admitted to that equal ſky
His faithful Dog ſhall bear him company.
Go, wiſer Thou! and in thy ſcale of ſence
Weigh thy *Opinion* againſt *Providence*:
Call Imperfection what thou fancy'ſt ſuch,
Pronounce HE acts too little, or too much;
Deſtroy all Creatures for thy ſport or guſt,
Yet thou unhappy, think 'tis He's unjuſt;
Snatch from his hand the Balance and the Rod;
Re-judge his Juſtice, Be the GOD of GOD!
In *Pride* (my Friend) in *Pride*, our error lies;
All quit their ſphere, and ruſh into the Skies.

Pride ſtill is aiming at the bleſt abodes,
Men would be Angels, Angels would be Gods.
Aſpiring to be Gods, if Angels fell,
Aſpiring to be Angels, Men rebell:
And who but wiſhes to invert the Laws
Of ORDER, ſins againſt th' Eternal Cauſe.

Ask for what end the heav'nly bodies ſhine?
Earth for whoſe uſe? *Pride* anſwers, "'Tis for mine:
For me kind Nature wakes her genial pow'r,
Suckles each herb, and ſpreads out ev'ry flow'r;
Annual for me, the grape, the roſe renew
The juice nectareous, and the balmy dew;
For me, the mine a thouſand treaſures brings,
For me, health guſhes from a thouſand ſprings;
Seas roll to waft me, ſuns to light me riſe,
My footſtool Earth, my canopy the Skies!

But errs not Nature from this gracious end,
From burning ſuns when livid deaths deſcend,
When earthquakes ſwallow, or when tempeſts ſweep
Towns to one grave, a Nation to the deep?

Blame we for this the wiſe Almighty Cauſe?
"No ('tis reply'd) he acts by *gen'ral Laws*;
"Th' exceptions few; ſome change ſince all began;
"And what created, perfect?"—Why then *Man*?
If the great end be human Happineſs,
And Nature deviates; how can Man do leſs?
Nature as much a conſtant courſe requires
Of ſhow'rs and ſunſhine, as of man's deſires,
As much eternal ſprings and cloudleſs skies,
As men for ever temp'rate, calm, and wiſe.
If Plagues or Earthquakes break not Heav'n's deſign,
Why then a Borgia or a Catiline?
From Pride, from Pride, our very reas'ning ſprings;
Account for moral, as for nat'ral things:
Why charge we Heav'n in thoſe, in theſe acquit?
In both, to reaſon right is to ſubmit.
Better for Us, perhaps, it might appear,
Were there all Harmony, all Virtue here;
That never Air or Ocean felt the wind;
That never Paſſion diſcompos'd the mind:

But all ſubſiſts by Elemental ſtrife;
And Paſſions are the Elements of Life.
The gen'ral ORDER, ſince the whole began,
Is kept in *Nature*, and is kept in *Man*.

What would this Man? now upward will he ſoar,
And little leſs than Angel would be more;
Now looking downward, juſt as griev'd appears
To want the ſtrength of Bulls, the Fur of Bears.
Made for his uſe all Creatures if he call,
Say what their uſe, had he the pow'rs of all?

Nature to each, without profuſion kind,
The proper organs, proper pow'rs aſſign'd,
Each ſeeming want compenſated of courſe,
Here, due degrees of Swiftneſs; there, of Force;
Each Beaſt, each Inſect, happy as it can;
Is Heav'n unkind to nothing but to Man?
So juſtly all proportion'd to each ſtate,
Nothing to add, and nothing to abate:
Shall Man, ſhall reaſonable Man, alone,
Be, or endow'd with all, or pleas'd with none?

Thro' gen'ral Life, behold the Scale arise
Of *ſenſual*, and of *mental* Faculties.
Vaſt Range of Senſe! from Man's imperial race
To the green Myriads in the peopled Graſs!
What modes of ſight, betwixt each wide extreme,
The Mole's dim curtain, and the Lynx's beam:
Of ſmell, the headlong Lioneſs between,
And Hound, ſagacious on the tainted green!
Of hearing, from the Life that fills the flood,
To that which warbles thro' the vernal wood.
In the nice Bee, what ſenſe ſo ſubtly true
From pois'nous herbs extracts the healing dew!
The Spider's touch, how exquiſitely fine,
Feels at each thread, and lives along the line.
How *Inſtinct* varies! what a Hog may want,
Compar'd with thine, half-reas'ning Elephant!
Twixt that, and *Reaſon*, what a nice Barrier,
For ever ſep'rate, yet for ever near.
Remembrance, and Reflection, how ally'd!
What thin partitions Senſe from Thought divide

And middle Natures, how they long to join,
Yet never paſs th' inſuperable Line!
Without this juſt *Gradation*, could they be
Subjected theſe to thoſe, or all to thee?
The Pow'rs of all ſubdu'd by thee alone,
Is not thy Reaſon all thoſe pow'rs in one?
The bliſs of Man (could Pride that bleſſing find)
Is, not to know, or think, *beyond* Mankind;
No ſelf-confounding Faculties to ſhare;
No Senſes ſtronger than his brain can bear.
Why has not Man a microſcopic eye?
For this plain reaſon, Man is not a Fly:
What the advantage, if his finer eyes
Study a Mite, not comprehend the Skies?
His Touch, if tremblingly alive all o'er,
To ſmart, and agonize at ev'ry pore?
Or quick Effluvia darting thro' his brain,
Dye of a Roſe, in Aromatic pain?
If Nature thunder'd in his opening ears,
And ſtunn'd him with the muſic of the Spheres,

How would he wiſh, that Heav'n had left him ſtill
The whiſp'ring Zephyr, and the purling Rill?
Who finds not Providence all-good and wiſe,
Alike in what it gives, and what denies?
See, thro' this Air, this Ocean, and this Earth,
All Nature quick, and burſting into birth.
Above, how high progreſſive life may go?
Around how wide? how deep extend below?
Vaſt Chain of Being! which from God began,
Ethereal Eſſence, Spirit, Subſtance, Man,
Beaſt, Bird, Fiſh, Inſect! what no Eye can ſee,
No Glaſs can reach! from Infinite to Thee!
From Thee to Nothing!—On ſuperior Pow'rs
Were we to preſs, inferior might on ours;
Or in the full Creation leave a Void,
Where one ſtep broken, the great Scale's deſtroy'd:
From Nature's Chain whatever Link you ſtrike,
Tenth, or ten thouſandth, breaks the chain alike.
And if each Syſtem in Gradation roll,
Alike eſſential to th' amazing Whole;

The leaſt confuſion but in one, not all
That Syſtem only, but the whole muſt fall.
All this dread Order, ſhall it break? For thee?
Vile Worm!—O Madneſs! Pride! Impiety!

What if the Foot, ordain'd the duſt to tread,
Or Hand to toil, aſpir'd to be the Head?
What if the Head, the eye or ear, repin'd
To ſerve mere Engines to the ruling Mind?
Juſt as abſurd, for any Part to claim
To be another, in this gen'ral Frame:
Juſt as abſurd, to mourn the taſks or pains,
The great directing MIND of ALL ordains.

All are but parts of one ſtupendous Whole:
Whoſe Body *Nature* is, and *God* the Soul:
That, chang'd thro' all and yet in all the ſame,
Great in the Earth as in th' Ætherial frame,
Warms in the Sun, refreſhes in the Breeze,
Glows in the Stars, and bloſſoms in the Trees,
Lives thro' all Life, extends thro' all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unſpent,

Breathes in our ſoul, informs our mortal part,
As full, as perfect, in a hair, as heart,
As full, as perfect, in vile Man that mourns,
As the rapt Seraphim, that ſings and burns;
To Him no high, no low, no great, no ſmall;
He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.

Ceaſe then, nor ORDER *Imperfection* name:
Our proper bliſs depends on what we blame.
Know thy own *Point*. This juſt, this kind degree
Of blindneſs, weakneſs, Heav'n beſtows on thee.
Submit —— in this, or any other Sphere,
Secure to be as bleſt as thou canſt bear.
All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;
All Chance, Direction which thou canſt not ſee;
All Diſcord, Harmony not underſtood;
All partial Evil, univerſal Good:
And ſpight of Pride, and in thy Reaſon's ſpight,
One truth is clear; "Whatever Is, is RIGHT."

FINIS.

Reason in our faculty informs our mortal part,
As full, as perfect, in a hair, as heart,
As full, as perfect, in vile Man that mourns,
As the rapt Seraphim, that sings and burns;
To Him no high, no low, no great, no small;
He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.

Cease then, nor ORDER Imperfection name:
Our proper bliss depends on what we blame.
Know thy own Point. This kind, this kind degree
Of blindness, weakness, Heav'n bestows on thee.
Submit — in this, or any other Sphere,
Secure to be as blest as thou canst bear:
All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;
All Chance, Direction which thou canst not see;
All Discord, Harmony not understood;
All partial Evil, universal Good:
And spite of Pride, and in thy Reason's spite,
One truth is clear; "Whatever IS, is RIGHT."

FINIS.